SOME NEW BOOKS.

Russia's Poets.

The acquaintance with Russian literature possessed by educated Englishmen and Americans is for the most part limited to the writings of Russian novelists from Turgenieff or Leo Tolstoi to Maxim Gorky. About Russian poetry relatively little is popularly known, owing doubtless to the paucity of good English translations. An attempt to remedy the lack is made in a volume of essays supplemented with English versions of notable passages from Russian poets by Rosa Newmarch (The John Lane Company). The author does not profess to offer an exhaustive conspectus of Russian achievements in verse. The individual singers whom she has chosen for discussion as specially exemplifying certain phases of Russian culture are the Romantic poets Pushkin and Lermontov, the popular poets Koltsov and Nikitin, Nekrassov, who was filled with bitter resentment aggravated by the iron handed régime of Nicholas I.; Khomiakov, the poet of Slavophilism, and Nadson, a poet of the Decadence. In order to explain, however, the evolution of Russian poetry the author devotes some thirty pages to the precursors of Pushkin, giving some examples of their merits in translations. Almost all of the translations are the author's own. She acknowledges, however, obligations to Prof. Morfill and to Miss Helena Frank for permission to include several of their translations in this volume.

In an introductory chapter the author points out that Russian literature does not lend itself to precise classification. The tendencies of particular periods overlap and arbitrary distinctions, borrowed from Western Europe, are often misleading. Our author deems it not surprising that upon those interested in the subject should be pressed the questions: Does Russian literature consist simply of a series of superb but disorganized efforts to express the spirit of the nation? Is it only a maze of intricate ramifications, leading back to no point of departure? Has there been no continuous literary development, carried out under traditions which have a definite origin? Our author holds that the answers to such questions depend upon our convictions as to Pushkin. Is he, or is he not, a central point at which are focused the brightest rays of Russian sentiment and intellect?

I.

For the beginnings of Russian metrical literature we must go back to the first half of the eighteenth century. Bielinsky, the first great Russian critic, regarded Lomonossov (1712-65) as the first Russian poet worthy of the name. Kheraskov (1733-1807) must be credited with a monumental work in verse entitled "The Rossiad," which earned for him the pompous title of the "Russian Homer." He was greatly honored by his contemporaries, and according to Bielinsky his influence lasted until the appearance of Pushkin. Bogdanovich (1728-78) is best known by his mythological poem "Psyche" (Dushenka), which seems to have enjoyed extraordinary popularity and which, so far as the main idea is concerned, was borrowed from La Fontaine's "Psyché et Cupidon." "Where," asks Karamzin, doubtless expressing the opinion of his day, "is the Russian who has not read 'Dushenka'?" Sir John Bowring in his "Russian Anthology" speaks of it as "a graceful and lovely poem." A more modern writer, Waliszeuski, in his "History of Russian Literature," says that Bogdanovich has introduced into the work episodes of a "revolting cynicism," and depicted his "Psyché" as "a vulgar and depraved coquette." The author of the book before us thinks that the average reader will neither be captivated by the literary grace nor shocked by the obscenity of "Dushenka," but will only wonder mildly that the allegory should have called forth expressions of extravagant praise or censure.

Passing over Von Vizin, whose gifts were exercised almost exclusively in the sphere of dramatic literature, our author finds in Derjavin the next link in the chain of Russia's poetry. In 1782 he won the favor of Catharine II. by his poem "Felitsa," in which he sang the praises of the Empress and mirrored to some extent the sentiments and characteristics of her reign. An artist by temperament, he invested the conventional verse of the day with a freshness and charm unknown to his contemporaries. His anacreontic odes have been compared for plastic beauty and graceful imagery to some of the gems in the Greek anthology, but already in this poet traces of national sentiment are discernible, slight, indeed, but sufficient to make the reader realize almost for the first time that he is in contact with a Russian mind.

Our author feels that in reviewing the precursors of Pushkin she cannot overlook Karamzin (1766-1826), although strictly speaking he was not a poet but a historian. His influence, however, upon every branch of Russian literature was profound, because he substituted for the stilted diction of the schools the living language, not, indeed, of the nation, but of society. In electing to express himself with greater simplicity Karamzin incidentally brought about a great reformation in his native tongue. He began the emancipation of the Russian language from the bondage of classical convention, the complete fulfilment of which only came with Pushkin.

To the period of Karamzin's influence, which lasted about a quarter of a century, succeeded the romantic movement, but before giving some account of the latter's leading representatives our author deems it advisable to show in what way the romanticism of Russia differs from that of Western countries. It seems that the essential difference lies in the fact that in the former case it was a reflected light from other contemporary lands, whereas in the latter it was the revival of a bygone spirit. Consequently, though it colored the imagination of Russian writers, it did not mould their ideas. According to Golovin, who is here quoted, "Russian romanticism differs from that of the West because it does not owe its origin to a return to the Middle Ages. Chivalry and Catholicism, all the poetic decorations of that period, were too little in harmony with the Russian spirit to prove attractive to our poets." Pushkin himself merely dallied with the kind of romantic themes contemporaneously in vogue in western Europe. As soon as he found his individuality he dropped the paraphernalia of ultraromanticism for more national subjects and more realistic methods. Even Lermontov, who was far more under the spell of romanticism than Pushkin, understood it in a way totally different from Bürger's. The historic past has never proved so strong an influence in Russian art and literature as the actuality of the neighboring East. In the Caucasus, for example, with its glorious scenery and romantic life, the Russian poets, painters and musicians have always possessed a source of inspiration close at hand. Instead of purely fantastic heroes, such as the Laras and Conrads of Byron's poetry, or the Carl of Schiller's "Robbers," they have depicted the contemporary mountain chiefs of Georgia, and, more rarely, the Muscovite warriors of the sixteenth century in their grim and unalluring actuality. Thus their works, even from the dawn of the romantic movement in Russia, are far more concrete and real than those of the German romanticists. Jukovsky, however, sometimes called the Columbus of Russian literature, was an exception. He imported into his literary compositions the new romance he had discovered for himself in the romantic ballads of Schiller and Bürger. Consequently, his patriotic poems are, generally speaking, his weakest efforts, because nationality was hardly compatible with the spirit of mediaeval romanticism. His Russian legends, strive as he does to give them a glow of national color, might as well have been written by Bürger or Uhland. Russian society outgrew its original enthusiasm for Jukovsky's poetry, as Englishmen outgrew their taste for the lyrics of Thomas Moore. Our author recognizes nevertheless that his writings brought about for his own generation a healthy reaction from a surfeit of pseudo classicism. Nor was he a mere echo of the Western romanticists. Had he, indeed, been only the gifted translator who brought home the genius of Schiller and Byron to his fellow countrymen his service would have been worthy of gratitude, but he was something more than a mere translator. He actually transfused into the dried up veins of the national literature the warmth and vitality which throbbed at the heart of the romantic movement.

One or two poets coeval with Jukovsky are considered by our author worthy of mention, though they can hardly be described as literary pioneers. Ivan Kozlov (1779-1840) represents the ultraromantic tendency in Russian poetry. We are told that "his inspiration is not of the highest order, but his sense of form and fine ear for musical cadence make his verse pleasant reading." He translated many of Byron's poems, but had scarcely sufficient spirit for the task. A more interesting personality was Batiushkov (1787-1855), who had a fine technique and is credited with perhaps greater intellectual vigor than Jukovsky. His poems indeed present the sharpest contrast to those of the last named writer. Jukovsky drew inspiration from mediaeval romanticism; Batiushkov, from the antique. The latter was as much attracted by clearness of thought and correctness of expression as was the former by visionary ideas and vague melancholy. Like Keats, Batiushkov was one of the rare instances of a mind impregnated by the Hellenic spirit, without ever having come in direct contact with the Greek classics. He was a good Latin scholar, but, save through Schiller, knew nothing of Greece; yet, according to our author, it is hard to believe that his beautiful examples from the Greek anthology, some twenty in number, were actually translated from French versions. In his choice of subjects he makes a somewhat ostentatious display of his classical tastes. He finds his best inspiration in paganism, and his treatment of mythological subjects is elegant and sculptural. "But it is sculpture carried out in [illegible] marbles, for Batiushkov by no means lacks passion or color of a clear, transparent kind. If, being a child of his age, he did not entirely escape from the prevailing influences of the hour, it was to the Greek romanticism he inclined at such rare moments, never to the glamour and mystery of German ballad writers." Batiushkov's life was overshadowed by the fear of inherited madness, and his actual working years were short. In 1822, at the early age of 35, his brain gave way entirely, yet for thirty-three years more he lived on in the darkness of hopeless insanity. Like Walter Savage Landor, with whom he has several points in common, Batiushkov was essentially the poet of connoisseurs rather than of the millions. He created a standard of technical perfection that surpassed anything previously attained in Russian poetry. He outlived the interest which his single volume of chef d'oeuvres inspired, but his voice speaks clearly from the polished and plastic verse of Pushkin.

Our author gives this translation of verses by Baratinsky:

> Be mirthful now, for nothing stays,
> Our good and evil both are brief.
> Capricious Fate leads many ways—
> Sometimes to joy, sometimes to grief,
> And is no friend to constancy.
> Listen, you whose lives are bright,
> For the uncertain hours be
> Winged for flight.
>
> Do not repine, since nothing stays,
> What matter if it chance at last
> That unexpectedly our days
> By cruel sorrow are o'ercast!
> Upon this changeful earth of ours
> The gods from pain took half its stings
> When alike to all the hours
> They gave wings.

The sample of Jukovsky's lyrics runs as follows:

> Flowret, faded and forsaken,
> Fragile beauty of the lea,
> Autumn's cruel hand hath taken
> All thy summer charms from thee.
>
> Heigh ho! that the years must bring
> This same destiny to all;
> One by one our joys take wing;
> One by one your petals fall.
>
> So each evening rings the knell
> Of some dream or rapture perished,
> And the fleeting hours dispel
> Each some vision fondly cherished.
>
> Life's illusions lie unmasked
> And the star of hope burns paler;
> Has not some sage long since ask ed:
> Men or blossoms which are frailer?

II.

Alexander Sergeivich Pushkin was born at Moscow in May, 1799. His father, as the poet liked to remember, was the descendant of an old although not a titled family—a man of many accomplishments, who took a lively interest in the literary movements of his day and inclined to embrace the Voltairean philosophy. It is interesting to learn that until he was 7 years of age Pushkin showed no signs of intellectual superiority. On the contrary he was so unnaturally dull and heavy that he gave his parents serious cause for anxiety. After he had passed his seventh year, however, Pushkin's entire constitution underwent an almost miraculous change. He lost his heavy gait and stolid air, becoming active and sprightly. His father now began to interest himself in the boy's education and several foreign teachers were engaged for him. By the time he was 9 he had already evinced the passionate enthusiasm for literature which never thereafter waned. His parents, who had once been worried by his sluggish temperament, were now equally alarmed at "the spirit of unresting flame" which seemed to possess him. As he threatened to become unmanageable on account of his quick temper and exuberant vitality, it was decided to send him to school, and in August, 1811, he entered the Lycée for the sons of the nobility at Tsarskoe-Selo. Like many another poet, however, Pushkin proved an unsatisfactory pupil. The director of the Lycée predicted a poor future for the youth, who neglected the regular studies for desultory reading in the school library and wasted valuable hours in editing the school magazine. Pushkin's earliest published verses appeared in 1814 over a pseudonym, and in the following year his full name was revealed to the literary world. In January, 1815, a public examination took place at the school, to which important officials were invited. Among the visitors was Derjavin. The old poet's attention was attracted to young Pushkin when the latter came forward to recite some verses of his own, "Reminiscences of Tsarskoe-Selo." He carried back to Petersburg a fervent impression of the youth's genius and a copy of the verses that had been recited. From that moment Pushkin's name became known to the chief literary men of the day. Jukovsky, then at the zenith of his popularity, conceived the highest hopes of Pushkin's future, and such was his belief in the lad's innate ability that he did not hesitate to submit his own poetry to the criticism of [illegible], who in his turn used to call him his "guardian angel." In the following year Karamzin arrived for a visit to Tsarskoe-Selo and renewed his acquaintance with Pushkin, whom he had seen as a child at his father's house in Moscow. Their relations became intimate, and chapter after chapter of Karamzin's famous "History" was read aloud in manuscript to the youthful Pushkin by the author.

At the age of 18 Pushkin left school and shortly afterward entered a regiment of the Foot Guards. He possessed at this time, we are told, a fine physique, was a keen sportsman, an excellent athlete, an accomplished horseman and one of the best pupils of a famous fencing master. He had, in a word, all the qualities which would contribute to make him popular within the fashionable military set in which he was now launched. Our author holds that the unsavory chronicle of intrigues, duels and excesses of all kinds in which he is said to have indulged at this period of his life has lost nothing in transmission. She deems it doubtful, in fact, whether either Pushkin or Byron was as black as each painted himself and so induced others to paint him. She pronounces it certain that Pushkin, at all events, maintained a lofty and almost sacerdotal conception of the poet's mission, and would break away suddenly from his unwholesome surroundings at some secret prompting of his inspiration.

It is pronounced not clear how far Pushkin was implicated in the doings of the secret political societies which culminated in the formidable but eventually abortive conspiracy of December, 1825. He was living on his father's estate at Mikhailovsky when the news of the "Decembrist" revolt reached him. Looking back upon his escape from arrest and imprisonment or perhaps the gallows Pushkin seems to have undergone a sudden revulsion of feeling. He hastened to burn all his compromising letters and the autobiography on which he was engaged. Early in 1826 he approached by letter his influential friends in the capital with the hope of being received into favor by the Government of Nicholas I. In September of that year he was informed that an imperial courier and a post carriage awaited him at Mikhailovsky. Without having any explanation vouchsafed to him he was carried off at full gallop to Moscow, and while still bespattered with mud was hurried into the presence of Nicholas I. Pushkin himself gives the following account of his interview: "The Emperor, having conversed with me for some time, finally asked: 'Pushkin, would you have taken part in the revolt of December 14, 1825, had you been in Petersburg?' The answer was: 'Indubitably. All my friends were in the plot and I must have taken my share in it. My absence alone saved me, for which I thank God.' The Emperor's comment was: 'You have committed follies enough. Now I trust you are reasonable and that we shall never quarrel again. You must send me all you write. I myself will be your censor.'" Pushkin, it seems, was deeply touched by the reception and eager to take service under so generous a master. He took for granted that an Emperor's censorship would be merely nominal.

As time went on, however, he learned that suspicion, once incurred, was like a stain hopelessly indelible. Nicholas might be Pushkin's censor in name, but the Minister of Police took care to be so in fact. Now began a long series of petty annoyances, restrictions and reprimands which put the poet's life on a level with that of a ticket of leave man and led to the disenchantment and acquiescent languor which have been observed to constitute the final stage in the career of almost every Russian poet. Official suspicion dogged him even to the grave. Mortally wounded in a duel on January 27, 1837, he died two days afterward, and the Government, fearing a demonstration, excluded the public from the church in which the requiem service was performed. A little later his remains were removed during the night and escorted by the police to the graveyard of a monastery where those of his mother had been interred. For many years after his death the close censorship exercised over the publication of his writings obstructed the preparation of a complete biographical and critical estimate. Bielinsky's weighty articles, written between 1843 and 1846, though themselves lacking in insight, long continued to form the basis of all close analysis of his work. Our author points out that the poems dating from Pushkin's school days and the early satirical or "pamphlet" verses are chiefly interesting as showing the extraordinary rapidity of his intellectual growth and the care which from the first he bestowed on the technical side of his art. "We discern the influence of Jukovsky in the romantic coloring of some of these juvenile poems, and that of Batiushkov in the chiselled excellence of their workmanship." Hard on the political verses followed a group of transitional poems, in which the influence of his Russian precursors was perceptibly on the wane and that of Byron claimed ascendancy. One of the first indications of the Byronic phrase is recognizable in a short poem, "The Black Shawl," a Moldavian song which the poet overheard in a tavern and adapted to his own fancy. "The Prisoner in the Caucasus" has been defined as "The Corsair" in another dress. Speaking of this work a little later Pushkin said: "It utters the voice of my heart," but in his maturity his artistic judgment condemned it. In "The Gypsies" (1824) the difference in method and sentiment between the author of "Childe Harold" and his Russian disciple was distinctly noticeable. Already Pushkin was outgrowing the sombre self-sufficiency which made Byron pose for the leading character in most of his romantic poems. The Russian poet now began to regard his creations from an objective, sometimes even from a critical, standpoint. In fine, "The Gypsies" marks the second phase of Pushkin's worship of Byron. A further stage of independent development was reached in "Poltava," which some critics rank as Pushkin's finest achievement. The true hero of "Poltava" is Peter the Great, whose character had an intense fascination for Pushkin and to whose memory he dedicated one of the most powerful and polished of his poems, "The Bronze Horseman."

In none of Pushkin's works, however, can be traced his gradual emancipation from Byron's influence and his steady progress toward independence and nationality so distinctly as in "Eugene Oniegin." This was a kind of confession or autobiographical record extending over seven years of his life. In 1823 Pushkin wrote to a friend that he had begun a novel in verse in the style of "Don Juan," and in the preface to his first chapter, published two years afterward, he says that the opening of his work will recall "Beppo," the facetious creation of the gloomy Byron. A year later he had left all thought of imitation so far behind that he denied indignantly any connection between "Onegin" and "Beppo" or "Don Juan." Here for the first time his generation beheld Russian scenery and Russian social life depicted with a touch of realism. The elements of realism and nationality contained in "Eugene Onegin" carried away the Russian public and each new chapter was awaited eagerly and devoured with unflagging interest. A generation later the temper of the reading public in Russia underwent a complete change. The utilitarians of the '60s repudiated "Eugene Onegin" as a picture of Russian life and morals and conceded to Pushkin nothing but a superficial relationship to the "national idea," as they themselves conceived it. In stripping the laurels of nationality from Pushkin's head to place them on Gogol's brow Tchernishevsky, one of the principal representatives of utilitarianism, admits that with the former literature first began to penetrate Russia's social life, but he insists that so far it concerned itself only with superficialities, the charms rather than the realities of existence. Our author thinks that to some extent the criticism was justified. "Contemporary questions," she says, "were certainly not of the first interest to Pushkin. His aristocratic prejudices and the cosmopolitan views he had imbibed early in life from a common(?) of foreign culture debarred him from identifying himself completely with the people, while his lofty conception of the poet's mission caused him to look with disdain upon those who held the belief that man could live by bread alone." Naturally this Olympian attitude was resented by the economic scientists, one of whom spoken, Pissariev, went so far as to deny Pushkin's claim to be considered in any sense a great poet. "Our little Pushkin," said Pissariev in concluding a review of the poet's works, "is merely an artist—nothing more. That is to say he uses his artistic virtuosity as a medium whereby to let the whole reading public of Russia into the melancholy secret of his inward emptiness and intellectual weakness." Notwithstanding the intolerance of the high priests of utilitarianism the author of this book contends that the influence of "Eugene Oniegin" upon succeeding literary generations cannot be disputed. The types created in that work continued to be favorites of Russian novelists down to and including Turgeniev and Tolstoi.

In Pushkin's historical play "Boris Godunov" our author sees much that is admirable for intellectual force and fine workmanship. "The insight, however, the passion and copious humor of the Elizabethans find no echo in Pushkin. One wonders what Webster would have made of this dark and lurid page of history." Nevertheless there are moments of forcible eloquence in "Boris Godunov," and those portions of the play which deal with the Russian populace are undoubtedly the strongest. "Here Pushkin disencumbers himself from theatrical conventions and shows direct observation of human nature as well as an accurate knowledge of the national characteristics."

We have seen how the influence of Pushkin suffered a temporary eclipse during the acute political crisis of the '60s. It remained for the author to recall how twenty years later the greatest Russian writers united to restore to Pushkin his rightful place in the hierarchy of Russian men of letters. This act of restitution took place at the ceremony of unveiling the Pushkin monument in Moscow, July, 1880. On this occasion Turgeniev, Ostrovsky, Dostoievsky and others addressed a vast assemblage, moved by one desire, namely, to pay homage to the memory of the foremost national poet. Our author for her part does not presume to propound a final judgment upon Pushkin, a task which hitherto has proved beyond the powers of Russian critics. She suggests, however, that if to a more strenuous generation Pushkin appeared indifferent to the burning social questions of his day it should be remembered that during the second, third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century Russian life was not the complex, heartbreaking tangle it has since become. "Is it not more than probable that Pushkin rendered a greater service to his country by being simply the great artist he was than he would have done by subordinating his genius exclusively to social and political interests? Undoubtedly he was the most consummate master of his materials who had yet appeared in Russia, and never failed to impress the reader by the artistic skill with which he used his native language as a tool that, though he had not actually forged it for himself, he had learned to temper and sharpen to the most delicate uses." Moreover, although he introduced the element of realism he ignored its baser purposes. "He ennobled everything he touched. He possessed an unerring sense of form, an irresistible musical charm and a felicity of expression and picturesqueness of vision which remain to this day a precious legacy to the Russian poets and novelists who have succeeded him."

From the English versions here presented of extracts from Pushkin's poetry we select "The Black Shawl":

> As of senses bereft at a black shawl I stare,
> And my chill heart is tortured with deadly despair.
>
> When dreaming too fondly in credulous youth
> I loved a Greek maiden with passion and truth.
> My Greek girl was gentle and loving and fair;
> But my joy quickly sank in a day of despair.
>
> Once I feasted gay friends, ere the banquet was o'er
> A Jew, the accurst, softly knocked at my door.
> Thou art laughing, he whispered, in pleasure's mad whirl
> But she hath betrayed thee, thy young Grecian girl.
>
> I cursed him, but gold as a guerdon I gave,
> And took as companion my trustiest slave.
>
> My swift charger I mounted; at once we depart,
> And the soft voice of pity was stilled in my heart.
> The Greek maiden's dwelling I hardly could mark,
> For my limbs they grew faint, and my eyes they grew dark.
>
> I silently entered alone and amazed;
> An Armenian was kissing the girl as I gazed.
>
> I saw not the light, but I seized my good blade;
> The betrayer ne'er finished the kiss that betrayed.
> On his warm headless body I trampled, then spurned,
> And silent and pale to the maiden I turned.
> I remember her prayers—in her blood how she strove.
> Then perished my Greek girl—then perished my love.
>
> I tore the black shawl from her head as she lay,
> Wiped the blood dripping weapon, and hurried away.
> When the mists of the evening rose gloomy, my slave
> Threw each corpse in the Danube's dark fast rolling wave.
>
> Since then no bewildering eyes can delight;
> Since then I forbear festive banquets at night.
>
> As of senses bereft, at a black shawl I stare
> And my chill heart is tortured with deadly despair.

It is hard to believe that the same man can have penned the four simple following stanzas that depict a Russian "High Road in Winter":

> Between the rolling vapors
> The moon glides soft and bright;
> Across the dreary fallows
> She casts a mournful light.
>
> Along the wintry high road
> A troika moves fleet;
> Its little bells are ringing
> One silver tone and sweet.
>
> [illegible]

III.

It was in January, 1837, that Pushkin fell, at the age of 38, killed in a duel about a woman. His intellectual successor, Lermontov, was only 27 when, in July, 1841, he also fell in a similar encounter. Of the latter's brief but brilliant career our author says that "the brightness of the star who illumined the literary horizon when Pushkin's light had set was a radiant meteor flash across the night and vanish into space." Compounded of all fiery elements Lermontov might indeed fitly be compared to one of those aerolites whose apparition while it lasts is more arresting than that of moon or stars. At the time of his advent he promised to rival the glory of Pushkin, because his passion was more intense and his personality more sincere. For a few working years his attraction for his contemporaries was immense, for no other of the Russian poets felt so keenly and expressed so fully the results of the romantic movement. The materials for his biography are scanty, but his poems go far to supply this deficiency, for in no other writers, with possibly the exceptions of Rousseau and Byron, are the processes of self-analysis and self-revelation so clearly visible.

Michael Lermontov was born at Moscow in October, 1814. His father was of Scotch descent, his name being merely the Russian-ized form of Learmont. It delighted the boy, an eager reader of Scott's novels, to feel himself allied by blood to the heroes of Scottish chivalry. The poet's mother was of a rich and aristocratic family and her runaway match with the penniless young officer gave great offence to her own people. Nor did the love marriage turn out happily. She soon returned to live with her mother, and died in the third year of her married life. Thus her son's domestic surroundings were by no means ideally fortunate. He was adopted, however, by his maternal grandmother, who made of him a spoiled child though she spared neither pains nor money to give him a first rate private education. The society which surrounded him in boyhood was almost exclusively feminine and accentuated the softer side of his character at the expense of virility. Habits of reserve and morbid introspection followed him to school and to the University of Moscow, from which latter institution he was dismissed before he had taken his final degree for taking part in a demonstration against an incompetent professor. Proceeding to St. Petersburg, he entered the Guards School, which was recruited exclusively from the rich and aristocratic classes. Here he underwent a reaction from the reserve of his early youth and shared in all the mad dissipations and scandalous extravagances of his companions. Much of the verse which he wrote at this time was of an unpleasantly erotic nature. From this point of view Lermontov recalls Alfred de Musset. Not entirely, however, did he neglect his intellectual interests. Between the ages of 14 and 18 he wrote most of his early lyrical poems, besides "The Demon," "Ismail Bey," historical tales and plays.

At this time he made few efforts to see himself in print. His attitude, indeed, toward his early work was exceedingly critical, and it was not until Pushkin's death in 1837 provoked a passionate outburst of grief and resentment that Lermontov became generally known as a poet. For the concluding passage of the elegy on Pushkin, in which he apostrophized two influential members of the court circle as "the vain descendants of a line famed only for its baseness, murderers of genius, truth and fame," he was exiled to the Caucasus. Through the efforts of his grandmother his term of banishment was reduced to a year, but even this brief respite from the atmosphere of intrigue and dissipation proved beneficial to his literary work. He now revived the charm of the old Russian legends with extraordinary success in his "Ballads of the Czar Ivan Vassilievich." In 1839 he wrote several poems, including "Mtsieri, a Georgian Tale," and "A Hero of Our Day," which although not a poem but a novel can no more be overlooked than can Alfred de Musset's "Mémoires d'un Enfant du Siècle." In another poem, "The Dream," written some time before his fatal duel, is foreshadowed with extraordinary accuracy his own tragic end.

In an analysis of his works our author says that save for one or two poems which echo the style of Pushkin Lermontov was not greatly indebted to his fellow countrymen. He read assiduously Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Cowper, Scott and, above all, Byron. Of Shelley most of his biographers seem to be agreed that he knew nothing whatever, yet as a poet he shares with Shelley the ineffable charm and fervid eloquence that are the insignia of the very elect. Goethe's philosophy was incomprehensible to the undisciplined, wholly impulsive nature of the Russian poet. With Schiller he was more in touch on the romantic side. All that was heroic and highly colored in the author of "The Robbers" appealed to him; but in Lermontov the note of Teutonic sentimentality was entirely lacking. Shakespeare he knew, but never felt his influence deeply. Cowper and Scott left no permanent traces upon his intellectual development. Heine's pessimism, with its satirical vein which spared neither himself nor his vocation, did not accord with Lermontov's exalted view of his own personality and genius. He was not introspective. His egotism urged him to look without rather than within, and so it came to pass that Byron was the guiding light of his young imagination. Lermontov, indeed, was too much like Byron in many respects to need making up in order to pass as a masquerader in "Childe Harold's cloak." He said of himself, "I am Byron with a Russian soul." The chivalrous type of Byronic hero, however—the prototype of the poet himself who laid down his life for the weak and oppressed—never appeared in Lermontov's poems. His heroes are all self-sufficient; take themselves very seriously. The poems generally supposed to bear the most direct evidence of Byron's influence are "The Demon" and "Mtsieri," but in the former there are lyrical flights which reveal more affinity to Shelley than to Byron. One of these our author translates:

> Weep not, child, since all in vain
> On his cold and silent corpse
> Pour your tears like living rain.
>
> * * * * * * *
>
> O'er the vast aerial sea
> Sailless, with no helm to guide,
> Choirs of stars in harmony
> Through the chartless ether glide.
>
> 'Mid illimitable space,
> Fleecy cloud flocks, lucent, white,
> Cross the heavens and leave no trace
> Of their unsubstantial flight.
>
> Hours of parting, hours of meeting,
> Bring them neither joy nor sorrow;
> Of the past they go unweeping,
> Hoping nothing from tomorrow.
>
> In this hour of dire distress
> Let thy thoughts toward them stray,
> And to earthly pain and stress
> Be insensible as they.

Here is an example of a genre of poetry, half ballad and half elegy, in which Lermontov was accounted for his countrymen especially successful. It is entitled "The Cossack(?)." Our author's version is:

> [illegible]

IV.

In a chapter entitled "The Popular Poets" we find sketches of Koltsov, Nekrassov and Nikitin. These three singers gave voice to the joys and sufferings of the great mass of the Russian people, the peasantry and the proletariat. Koltsov, born in 1809 in one of the southeastern provinces of Russia, was the son of a grazing farmer, who as soon as the boy had learned to read and write cut short his studies because he needed his help at home. During the days and nights which he spent on the steppe, however, he had ample leisure for reading and presently developed a taste for poetry. At the age of 15 he himself ventured to put a story into verse, but it was not until 1831 that two or three of his compositions found their way into print. In 1835 he published by subscription a small volume of poems which was welcomed enthusiastically and has ever since been widely read, though Koltsov never shared the extraordinary popularity of Nekrassov. Jukovsky and Turgeniev, however, were quick to recognize the remarkable intelligence of the "farmer poet." The latter was not destined to live long, but passed away somewhat suddenly in October, 1842, at the age of 33. Koltsov has been called "the Russian Burns," and it is certain that in his best work he is a peasant writing for the peasantry. He is credited with having the same fine lyrical gift, less copious perhaps, but equally melodious as Burns; the same power of graphic realism, the same heartfelt inspiration. He also shares the ardent temperament but not the licentiousness of the Scotchman. Our author would describe him as a paler reflection of Burns, never, she thinks, touching the same depths or the same heights of passion. Compared with Burns, he seems somewhat lacking in animal spirits. Now and then one comes in his verse upon a sharp cry of anguish or a profound sigh of regret, but he seems deliberately to have cultivated the principle that it is better to be patient and ready to face whatever may betide than to be blown like chaff upon the wind of despair. In fine, Koltsov was, if not among the greatest, certainly one of the healthiest, manliest and most sincere of Russian singers.

We quote one of Koltsov's shorter lyrics in an English translation by the author of this book:

> It was not at the springtide
> When life renews her sheen,
> When in the waving meadows
> The young grass first shows green.
>
> No tender dawns were flushing
> The sky with rosy red,
> Nor did the moon her level light
> Upon our wooing shed.
>
> No, all was chill, but under
> The coldness and the mist
> I wrapped my love around you
> And held you closely kissed.
>
> The nights of storm and darkness
> Flew over us apace,
> More swiftly than the cloud's flight
> Athwart the sun's bright face.
>
> And when the winter's tempest
> Howled furious and strong,
> We listened while it chanted
> For us its strange, wild song.
>
> Till sleep, the enchanter, found us
> And led us by the hand
> Across the plains of silence
> Into his wonderland.

We turn to the author's account of Nekrassov, who has been called the Russian Swift. She strikes the keynote of his work when she recalls Shelley's cry to Leigh Hunt: "I am sick of love songs; will no one give us a hate song?" The whole inspiration of Nekrassov's contribution to Russian literature seems to have sprung from bitterness and indignation. "More than 30,000 verses shot forth in a single jet of gall," M. de Vogüé has called it. Born in 1821, the son of a Russian land owner by the daughter of a rich Polish magnate, Nicholas Nekrassov, the future laureate of the Nihilists, was intended by his father for the military profession, but having been sent to St. Petersburg to join the military academy he saw fit to enter himself at the university, for which act of disobedience he was disinherited and left at 16 to make his living as best he could. Thenceforth it was not with mere poverty he had to contend but with actual starvation. One winter's night he lay down exhausted on a bench in some public garden in Petersburg and was only saved from certain death by the charity of a professional tramp. Subsequently for some years he earned a wretched livelihood by literary hack work. In the end his material circumstances improved, but the turn in fortune's wheel came too late and the spirit of revolt engendered by the privations of earlier years was never tamed. The great historic events which followed the accession of Alexander II. were impotent to alter the grim temper of his writings. The emancipation of the serfs, for instance, left the singer of their sufferings apparently untouched. At all events, it did very little to stop the acrid flow of his pessimism. His death in 1877 at the age of 56 was in keeping with the unbroken gloom of his life. The young Nihilistic party followed their psalmist to the cemetery in a silent, solemn procession conducted under the eye of the police.

It is characteristic of Nekrassov that although he has analyzed love from several points o' view he has left no love lyrics in the ordinary sense of the word. His passions appear to have run in the same rugged and bitter channels as all his other sentiments. As to his technique, he himself admitted that his verses were "rough and uncouth, without creative art." Our author thinks, however, that their dissonance and want of spontaneity are forgotten in their vigor and striking originality. "His manner—or lack of it—is his own. His imagery is new and forcible. Temperamentally, he was unable to see any but the dark places of life into which no light of joy or hope could penetrate for long. Against the tyranny of the world in which he lived his irony was unsparing." A terrible example of his irony is exhibited in the song which he puts in the mouth of the convicts condemned to toil in the gold mines of the Ural. The English version is our author's:

> Together, lads! For us there's work to do,
> They did not bring us here our hands to fold.
> Ah! Not for nothing did the good God strew
> The lap of mother earth with seams of gold.
>
> So, while your hands can serve you, work amain!
> [illegible]
> Your grandsons will be grateful some fine day
> [illegible]
>
> [illegible]

V.

The last chapter of this interesting volume is devoted to Nadson, distinguished as a poet of the Decadence. Simon Nadson was born at St. Petersburg in December, 1862. His father, who was of Jewish descent, died in a lunatic asylum before the boy reached his third year. His mother came of an aristocratic Russian family, and was as remarkable for her beauty as for her sincere and sympathetic disposition. Finding herself, however, in straitened circumstances after her husband's death, she had to become a governess and was able to do but little for her son, who was sent, however, to a preparatory class for the classical gymnasium and gave signs of great promise. Subsequently he became a pupil in the military school, where he received free board and education, and ultimately, at the age of about 20, he received through the influence of his mother's family a commission in the army, in spite of the fact that he already suffered from a chronic affection of the right lung. Some verses of his were published in his seventeenth year, and not long thereafter he attained a definite place in the republic of letters, which might perhaps have become illustrious had he not died early in 1886, when not yet 24 years old.

In the single volume of verse which represents the pathetic shortcomings in the fulfilment of his hopes the author of the book before us cannot find the sustained eloquence of Pushkin, the energy and passion of Lermontov, the complete sympathy with the national sentiment which characterizes the lyrics of Koltsov, nor even the cry of rebellious despair which stamps one in Nekrassov. Apart from personal interest, excited by a knowledge of his trials and physical sufferings, his verses attracted by their melody, their easy lyrical grace and their almost feminine tenderness. "Virility they lack, for his is the true [illegible], quivering with emotion, veiled by regret, but breathing a note of sincere and intimate feeling. He touched a secret, spiritual note in his contemporaries, echoing their disenchantment and timid hopes for the future, while in all he wrote the moral purpose is perhaps only too clearly evident." Possibly he was saved by a premature death from descending to the kind of poetry that "has a palpable design on us." Like many a Russian poet, Nadson had an unhappy love affair that "never knew its earthly close." It seems to have inspired the following poem, with an English translation of which by our author we must take leave of her book. The poem is entitled "Wherefore?"

> And was your love like mine? Treat doubts and fears
> But you long nights of sleepless anguish sound?
> Or did you pray for her through blinding tears
> With all the strength that chastened love can lend?
>
> And since you loosed your last, when out of sight,
> We left her in earth's breast among the dead,
> Has all your life been broken, and your light
> Your last pale glint of light extinguished?
>
> Not so! You live and hope, and still may see
> Your hopes fulfilled; you go your haughty ways,
> Forgetting her, perchance in mockery
> You smile to think that grief once claimed your days.
>
> Ah, favored child of Fate, caressed of Love!
> You never could her purest soul depths stir,
> As I—though sick and weary—still could move
> Her interest and win sweet words from her.
>
> Then wherefore fell to you the harrowing bliss
> Beside her in the parting hour to stand,
> And press a lingering, last, impassioned kiss
> Upon the lifeless marble of her hand?
>
> And when in that last, bitterest of all hours
> The requiem choir sang peace to her who died,
> Why should you strew her early grave with flowers,
> While like a stranger I must stand aside?
>
> Oh, had you guessed the silent, sullen ache
> Of hopeless loss that left my life in gloom
> You would have moved aside for pity's sake
> To let me stand chief mourner at her tomb.

M. W. H.

TREASURE OF THE DESERT.

In the Sahara All Property Is Expressed by Camels.

Primitive peoples who have no money measure all values by that possession which is most desired and most easily transferred. Thus among most of the inhabitants of the Sahara the camel is the measure of all values. Property, riches and camels are synonymous terms among most of the dwellers in the Sahara. Dr. Goldstein of Germany wrote a while ago that if a Tuareg were set down in the streets of Berlin the business blocks and residences would convey to him no idea of property. He would simply ask the greatest real estate landlord in the city how many camels he owned.

When Richardson met the Tuaregs and was entertained by one of their chiefs the traveller was told by his host that he wished to make Queen Victoria the finest present that any one could give her, and so he asked his guest to take back to her a mehari, which is a camel trained to fleetness and the most costly of Saharan camels.

While Barth was sojourning in Timbuktu there was danger for a few days that the street mob would attack his house. One of his women servants advised him to remove his "haivan" to a place of safety. This word means live stock, such as cattle or camels, and Barth told the woman that he had only his horse with him. It was some time before he learned that the servant did not refer particularly to his horse, but to all his possessions.

When the Frenchman Hourst succeeded in navigating the Niger from its mouth to Timbuktu some years ago, a desert dweller desiring to learn if he came of a family of substance asked him how many camels his father owned, and when Foureau crossed the desert with the largest exploring party that ever entered the Sahara he received from a wealthy native of Asger a present of a white camel and was told that it was the most expensive present that the residents of that region could give to any one.

As a rule, however, the number of camels in the possession of one individual is not large. The average man considers himself well to do if he owns two or three animals; the important chief is really wealthy if he possesses a herd of fifty or sixty, and the richest chief whom Nachtigal met in his seven years wanderings was said to own about 100 camels. No one will part with his camels excepting at an exorbitant price. Foureau found it impossible to buy them in the heart of the desert for less than about 250 francs, which was double their value in Algeria.

The grazing grounds are common to all and there is no property in land. The richest man lives in a tent and why should he sell camels to acquire the means to build a more commodious and substantial dwelling when he expects to move to some other place in a few weeks or months? He simply acquires all the camels he can get for the mere fun of having them.

To be sure he buys wives with his camels, just as the negro does with his cattle, and wives come very high in the Sahara, the daughter of the ordinary man being worth as much as four camels, while the price of a chief's daughter can be commanded only by the wealthy. Some explorers believe that very fat young women are most popular in the desert simply because camel's milk is fattening and if a girl is fleshy it shows that her father has given her all the camel's milk she can drink. Such a father must have a number of camels, is therefore a wealthy man, and it will be a good thing to marry into his family.